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The Role Of Transition Assistance: The Case Of Kosovo

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Contents

Executive Summary	3
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The Role of Transition Assistance: The Case of Kosovo	6
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<i>Background and Overview</i>	6
--------------------------------	---

<i>Was the decision to initiate a transition program made in a transparent fashion? Were the proper guidelines considered?</i>	8
--	---

<i>What were the strengths and weaknesses of transition assistance planning? What was the relationship between transition planning and country strategic planning?</i>	9
--	---

<i>How was transition assistance implemented in Kosovo? What were the strengths and weaknesses of the approach?</i>	12
---	----

<i>Were transition activities being handed off effectively to other mission offices or donors? Was the duration of transition programs appropriate?</i>	16
---	----

<i>Were transition activities achieving their objectives effectively?</i>	17
---	----

Lessons Learned and Recommendation	22
------------------------------------	----

Annex A: Organizations And People Interviewed	25
---	----

Annex B: Documents Consulted	27
------------------------------	----

Annex C: The Community Improvement Process In Kosovo—Experience To Date	28
---	----

Annex D: Lessons Learned	32
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Executive Summary

The Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE) has responsibility for conducting Agency-wide evaluations of USAID assistance topics of interest to USAID managers. In 2000, USAID initiated an evaluation of the role of transition assistance, with a specific emphasis on the role and activities of the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI). Transition assistance, as used here, refers to the OTI-administered programs providing flexible, short-term responses to help advance peaceful, democratic change in conflict-prone countries. This assistance is usually provided during the two-year critical period after conflict when countries are most vulnerable to renewed conflict or instability.

The CDIE assessment includes four case studies and a synthesis report and addresses five basic issues:

- Was the decision to initiate a transition program made in a transparent fashion? Were the proper guidelines considered?
- What were the strengths and weaknesses of transition assistance planning? What was the relationship between transition planning and country strategic planning?
- How was transition assistance implemented in Kosovo? What were the strengths and weaknesses of the approach?
- Were transition activities being handed off effectively to other mission offices or donors? Was the duration of transition programs appropriate?
- Were transition activities achieving their objectives effectively?

This paper summarizes findings and lessons learned from the case study of transition assistance in Kosovo. Through September 2000, OTI had funded 361 grants totaling approximately \$7.8 million.

Principal Findings

The study concludes that transition assistance played a valuable role in helping USAID, and the U.S. Government, initiate reconstruction and initial development activities in Kosovo. The decision for a separate program followed OTI guidelines for engagement. The program was integrated nearly seamlessly within the USAID strategic plan, permitting USAID to maximize results from its investment. Implementation operations and support were also effectively integrated at the field level. OTI's flexible programming approach allowed for strategy changes as needed as the transition evolved. Planning for handoff was timely and effective. OTI activities effectively formed grassroots organizations at the community level in seven areas of Kosovo, imparting basic democratic practices and initiating reconstruction efforts. The activities pursued reflect OTI's comparative advantage in introducing initiatives at the local level.

Lessons Learned

1. Kosovo presents a successful model for coordinating USAID transition programs.

The mission evolved a successful operation to carry out postconflict relief, transition, and development, presenting a successful model for effective coordination of sustainable development and OTI transition programs. Factors contributing to this success included 1) placement of field authority under the mission director, 2) a management style that provided sufficient independence for OTI to manage activity implementation, 3) a strategic plan that closely integrated OTI and other mission activities, 4) a shared understanding among OTI and sustainable development staff of their complementary roles in achieving shared objectives, and 5) office collocation in Pristina. Partners viewed OTI as part of the USAID presence rather than as a separate entity. CDIE interviewed mission directors who had experience with OTI programs; many had concerns about inadequate coordination and integration of the OTI program with longer term mission programs. The Kosovo case thus holds considerable promise as a model for future OTI field programs.

2. OTI's community development approach was effective.

The community development approach used in Kosovo effectively introduced basic democratic processes at the grassroots level, while helping war-devastated communities address reconstruction needs. Grants were provided for community-identified infrastructure and services as an incentive and a means to introduce and practice democratic organizational skills. OTI successfully used its field offices throughout the province to provide the close consultation with and support for the communities required to realize results with this approach. Rather than apply a rigid structure for developing community interaction, OTI helped Kosovars establish flexible structures—community improvement councils (CICs)—that could operate with democratic principles when local governmental structures were not in place.

3. Emphasizing community self-help and self-reliance discouraged dependency.

By encouraging communities to seek multiple sources of funding and assistance, OTI expanded resources and discouraged dependency. Even in poor, devastated postconflict situations such as Kosovo, communities can provide in-kind assistance or identify alternative funding to help them achieve community goals. By insisting that communities obtain other resources to complement OTI support, OTI discouraged dependence on a sole funding source. The self-help approach also helped inculcate skills for obtaining other assistance and boosted community confidence in its capacity to meet needs and improve its wellbeing.

Recommendation

Report results through the regular USAID reporting channel.

OTI program results are best reported in the USAID/Kosovo Result Review and Resources Report. OTI has its own results framework that includes intermediate results independent of those of country strategic plans. OTI/Kosovo initially developed its program with this framework in

mind, establishing objectives that differed from the USAID/Kosovo strategic plan. While the USAID/Kosovo strategy identified links between its program objectives and those of the OTI program, it was not clear whether the results would be reported principally within the USAID/Kosovo framework or that of OTI. Because the principal results of all transition programs were those realized within the country context itself, it is appropriate for OTI to report the results for its transition programs primarily in the USAID/Kosovo report.

The Role of Transition Assistance: The Case of Kosovo

Background and Overview

CDIE has been assessing the role of USAID transition assistance, with a specific emphasis on the role and activities of OTI in the Bureau of Humanitarian Response (BHR). OTI was established in 1994 to help address the increasing number of postcrisis situations. It has provided assistance to more than 20 countries worldwide. Transition assistance, as used here, refers to the OTI-administered programs that provide flexible, short-term responses to help advance peaceful, democratic change in conflict-prone countries. This assistance is usually provided during the two-year critical period after conflict when countries are most vulnerable to renewed conflict or instability.

The CDIE assessment includes four case studies and a synthesis report. This is the Kosovo case study. During October 3–7, 2000 a CDIE evaluator visited Kosovo to examine OTI program implementation at the field level and its effectiveness. He reviewed documents; visited Pristina, the capital, and OTI field offices in Peja, Gjilan, and Ferizaj; and interviewed representatives from USAID/Kosovo, OTI field and Washington offices, and the Europe and Eurasia Bureau. He also met with representatives of five Kosovo CICs, OTI grantees, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Ethnic Albanians constitute 90 percent of the population of Kosovo, a province of Serbia and Yugoslavia since the beginning of the 20th century. From 1989, Kosovo was under oppressive military rule that restricted Kosovars' basic rights and generated allegations of massive human rights violations. The U.S. and the European Union unsuccessfully attempted to encourage Serbian authorities in Belgrade to moderate their approach. After exhausting numerous ultimatums, NATO member countries launched an air war against Serbia in March 1999, forcing out its military occupation forces. Subsequently, NATO-provided security forces, the Kosovo Force (KFOR), have maintained peace while protecting the remaining Serbian and other minorities. The United Nations, through its mission in Kosovo, has served as the interim governmental authority in Kosovo.

In October 1998, a joint USAID BHR-ENI¹ assessment team visited Kosovo to identify future USAID assistance opportunities. The team proposed programs in community improvement and governance, security, civil society, media development, and transition toward longer term development, including an OTI program to promote "local participation in community decision-making."² The OTI/Serbia regional office managed the initial Kosovo program begun in November 1998 and opened an office in Pristina, the provincial capital. OTI attempted to initiate a program to address assessment recommendations, particularly the community-based programming. However, the rapidly deteriorating security environment made this effort extremely difficult. Serbian police presence was high as

¹ Bureau of Humanitarian Response-Europe and Newly Independent States Bureau. The latter was subsequently renamed as the Bureau for Europe and Eurasia.

² USAID/OTI, "Kosovo Transition Assistance Assessment Report, October 29–November 11, 1998," 1.

Kosovar Albanian rebel activity escalated. U.S. security officials also restricted official American movement in the province. OTI was able to operate only in Pristina, delaying opening of field offices throughout the province. During the war, OTI worked with Kosovars exiled in Macedonia, helping them prepare for their return to Kosovo. With the June 1999 agreement on Serbian military withdrawal and the arrival of the KFOR, the security environment in Kosovo improved dramatically. Over the June–July 1999 period, OTI was finally able to establish its network of seven offices.

OTI soon realized that many Serbs had already fled; more were to leave Kosovo over the coming months, as attacks by Kosovar Albanians increased and revenge killings became commonplace. The population had urgent postwar needs and neither the few remaining Serbs nor Albanians had any real experience with democratic or participatory community decisionmaking. Thus, OTI decided to complement the USAID mission's democracy/governance program with local community organizational formation and reconstruction.

From June 1999, OTI's work can be divided into six phases:

- *June–November 1999.* OTI initiated its Kosovo Transition Initiative (KTI) program flexibly. As an initial step in developing a substantive postemergency program, OTI established relationships with ad hoc citizens' groups and local postwar leaders, canvassed communities to identify citizens' immediate needs, and supported town meeting-type gatherings to help citizens address high-priority reconstruction needs.
- *December 1999–April 2000.* The town meetings led to the establishment of CICs organized to respond to their community's needs. The CIC concept evolved over several months as OTI established firmer criteria for citizen participation, helped the CICs define more precise roles, and expanded to new locations. OTI also initiated independent media and nongovernmental organization (NGO) support programs during this period.
- *May–August 2000.* CICs were actively engaged in local development activities. OTI worked with local media outlets to develop talk shows on community accomplishments. These attracted other support, including other donor assistance. OTI also supported outreach to non-Kosovar Albanian minorities.
- *August–October 2000.* OTI began emphasizing the appropriate roles of citizens and CICs in the upcoming local elections. It also supported the preparation of public service announcements for the media that informed citizens how to participate in political events.
- *After November 2000.* During this postelection phase, CICs were expected to work out role relationships with newly elected officials. Models of joint decisionmaking between the communities and their elected officials were to include efforts to make officials responsive and hold them accountable to communities. OTI planned to support projects agreed to by both CICs and elected officials, phasing out its support as communities and local governments provided more resources.

OTI program handoff proceeded and will continue through OTI phaseout, scheduled for September 2001. Both OTI and USAID/Kosovo staff characterized the handoff as the “complete mission buy-in to OTI’s accomplishments and approach.”³ As described later, mission contractors are picking up initiatives developed by OTI.⁴

This working paper is organized into sections that address key issues: 1) the decision to initiate a transition program, 2) the process for planning initiatives, 3) implementation of activities, 4) activity handoff, and 5) achievement of objectives. The last section provides the lessons learned.

Was the decision to initiate a transition program made in a transparent fashion? Were the proper guidelines considered?

After the war, OTI set up the KTI,⁵ a separate program for Kosovo that was managed from Pristina as part of the newly established USAID mission. This management approach mirrored that of the State Department, which set up the U.S. Office in Pristina (USOP) as a de facto embassy. OTI officials viewed the separate operation as appropriate for the new political reality, reflecting its strong international support.

Analysis of the Kosovo situation in July 1999 indicates that the decision to initiate a program for Kosovo met all five guidelines OTI uses in deciding on engagement, as follows:

- *Significant to U.S. interests.* The strategic importance of peace and stability in the Balkans and resolution of the Kosovo crisis within Serbia in the aftermath of the conflict is shown by major involvement by the United States, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the UN. The 1998 assessment team had previously concluded that OTI’s involvement in Kosovo could make a significant contribution to U.S. national interests.
- *Situation ripe for OTI assistance.* Successful completion of the NATO military action removed the 11-year Serbian occupation forces from Kosovo and created the opportunity for a grassroots program that could be an important complement to USAID and other donor programs. The new situation provided a timely opportunity for launching a separate OTI program.

³ Ibid., 2.

⁴ Ibid., 2: “This is part of the role OTI sees for itself in the first place. We ‘front-end’ and help define opportunities that the longer-term Mission presence may find advantageous to follow through on. In the end, the decision to re-engage and increase our presence in Kosovo after the bombing was not only because the conditions were right, but because OTI could build on and enhance relief efforts *while* providing platforms that would prove useful to longer term development efforts later. That is OTI’s niche in the largest sense.”

⁵ The NATO military operation began before the joint BHR/ENI assessment of late 1998 could be formally reviewed and approved. Nonetheless, the assumptions and elements remained valid and formed the base for the OTI program implemented in June 1999. The report recognized USAID/OTI’s distinct role alongside programs of the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and the ENI Bureau.

- *Stable operating environment.* The placement of NATO peacekeeping forces in Kosovo for at least two years provided sufficient promise of stability to operate an OTI field program and sufficient openness to work with local groups.
- *OTI capable of addressing key political development transition issues.* OTI identified important grassroots needs that OTI could effectively support, thereby complementing other USAID democracy/governance programs for Kosovo.
- *Successful outcome likely.* OTI decided that it could likely achieve its objectives within the context of intense international involvement, including massive NATO member and UN support for Kosovo's postwar development. This decision, however, was clearly a judgment call.

In summary, the decision to initiate a separate transition assistance program in Kosovo generally met the guidelines for engagement, although the guidelines were applied informally and loosely. Clearly, the decision to continue a program after the war was important to U.S. national interests within the new political context. OTI identified an appropriate transition role in Kosovo that would build on and enhance the relief efforts and support USAID's longer term development goals.

What were the strengths and weaknesses of transition assistance planning? What was the relationship between transition planning and country strategic planning?

The OTI/Kosovo program aimed to encourage Kosovars "to recognize the real benefits of participation and citizen action for the improvement of their communities and the creation of good government in the early stages and succeeding years of Kosovo's democratic development."⁶ It supported the OTI/Washington strategic framework, intermediate result 2: democratic political processes initiated, re-established, or expanded. The KTI had three objectives:

- *Empower citizens* to maximize their broad-based political influence in their communities;
- *Encourage and support* the conditions necessary for the development of local leadership; and
- Assist Kosovars to *mobilize and direct resources* to meet community-identified priorities.

These aims melded with the USAID/Kosovo strategic plan: "The role of USAID/OTI's KTI in civil society programming has been to encourage Kosovars to recognize and demonstrate

⁶ OTI/Kosovo, "The Kosovo Transition Initiative: Program Strategy and Implementation Guide, September 1 to December 31, 2000," 1.

the benefits of citizen action for the improvement of their communities and creation of good governance in the early stages and succeeding years of Kosovo's democratic development."⁷

The importance of Kosovo to U.S. national interests in Europe and the complicated political context necessitated close coordination of all U.S. government efforts, including those of USAID. OTI worked closely with the USAID mission and USOP to respond to emerging opportunities. All those interviewed cited the very close cooperation and constructive spirit prevailing among USAID's OTI and longer term development staff. USOP documented OTI's contribution in an impressive cable.⁸ The relationship of the OTI program to USAID program strategic objectives was set out in the USAID/Kosovo Strategy for Kosovo 2001-2003, as follows:

- *SO 1 Establishment of an economic policy and constitutional framework.* OTI's program is not directly related to this objective and its five intermediate results. However, OTI collaborates with the U.S. private voluntary organization, Voluntary Overseas Cooperative Association (VOCA), which implemented the agricultural support activity.
- *SO 2 Accountable and transparent governance.* OTI's activities directly supported intermediate result 1, free and fair elections, and intermediate result 3, independent media and civil society free to operate. OTI supported elections by working with CICs and helping develop public service announcements for print and broadcast media. It also supported civil society organizations, largely through CICs but also through its media support program.
- *SO 3 Restored normalcy in living standards and opportunities.* OTI supported both intermediate result 1, improved sustainability of social services and community infrastructure, and intermediate result 2, strengthened civil institutions. OTI's community development efforts contributed to community infrastructure development. The USAID mission community infrastructure and services program has begun identifying communities for water, electricity, social, and transport services for more than 50,000 Kosovars. Many of these activities built on OTI's support to CICs.

USAID/Kosovo viewed OTI's flexibility as an important asset to complement its longer term sustainable development program. Having been in Kosovo prior to 1999, OTI returned to Kosovo just as the USAID mission was being established. OTI/Washington staff developed the program in close consultation with new mission personnel. As the first USAID entity on the ground in Pristina (even preceding the USAID disaster relief office), OTI oriented new USAID staff to Kosovo.

⁷ USAID/Kosovo, "Strategy for Kosovo 2001-2003," 24.

⁸ Lawrence Rossin, "An Appreciation of the Post-conflict USAID Office of Transition Initiatives Program," February 2000. USOP Chief of Mission Rossin highlighted: "...the valuable role OTI's Kosovo program has played as a critical element of the larger U.S. effort to contribute to a more stable and democratic Kosovo. It is a model of assistance I believe can make an important and unique contribution in similar post-conflict settings."

OFDA-OTI Relationship

During the immediate postwar crisis-response period, tensions emerged between OFDA and OTI that reflected their related but differing roles. Pouring back into Kosovo more quickly than anticipated, Kosovars wanted to rebuild their homes and plant crops to accelerate a return to normalcy. OTI moved to address these immediate community-identified needs, particularly home reconstruction. But, OTI reports, OFDA did not support the OTI approach to shelter activities, particularly OTI's provision of roof tiles and bricks for home repair. Instead, OFDA argued for tents and plastic sheeting (a normal shelter relief response), indicating that OTI interfered with OFDA assistance. OTI urged OFDA to respond to the community-defined needs to facilitate community interaction, a central OTI objective.

A "collaborative compromise" was reached: OTI would set up its infrastructure repair project in the higher altitude areas where more substantial repairs were needed quickly because of the approaching colder weather, while OFDA would provide tents and plastic sheeting elsewhere. OFDA established and stocked a depot with housing materials provided and financed by both OFDA and OTI.

OTI-USAID/Kosovo Relationship

Mission leadership emphasized the complementary role of OTI assistance, particularly its central focus on grassroots issues, to the USAID strategy. Mission staff mentioned OTI's "different thought process" toward long-term strategic planning: OTI's focus on local grassroots versus the mission's broader approach and programming. Staff saw the local approach and OTI contacts as invaluable in helping them understand Kosovars' viewpoints and priorities. For example, the mission modeled its organization capacity building program on the successful OTI experience in Gjakova. As reported in the "Strategy for Kosovo 2001-2003":

The work of the Office of Transition Initiatives in community building continues to provide critical support to USAID's civil society building efforts. The Community Improvement Councils are key mechanisms for project selection in the Community Infrastructure and Services Program.⁹

In support of the municipal elections held in October 2000—the first free election in Kosovar experience—, OTI used the CIC approach to promote civic education and media programs, including the preparation of public service announcements on elections, citizens' roles, and other issues of public interest and debate. USAID staff reported that OTI support for elections was complementing mission democracy objectives, although some problems arose in the independent media area. Some media recipients of OTI's short-term grants expected almost automatic, longer term support from USAID's democracy program. OTI dealt with this confusion by ensuring that media grantees understood the distinction between the OTI and mission democracy grants.

⁹ USAID/Kosovo, "Strategy for Kosovo 2001-2003," 36.

OTI work also benefited from a contract with the firm¹⁰ implementing the media program for another mission entity. This firm employs experimental approaches for broadcast media and OTI tapped into its technical expertise on equipment specifications for radio and media outlets. OTI also used some of its training modules in preparing short-term, information-dissemination activities. Media work concentrated on radio broadcasting, while another mission office worked more with print media and television capacity building.

In summary, the mission formulated a strategic plan that effectively integrated OTI's short-term transition effort and the longer term program objectives. USAID/Kosovo has not yet formally reported results in an annual report to Washington, but it is clear from interviews that OTI successfully defined its effort within the overall USAID plan, even though it maintained separate objectives under the KTI. The strategic plan served as a useful framework to focus the OTI effort in Kosovo. Kosovo's small territory and population (1.8 million) and the robust international effort may have also contributed to the success in coordinating the OTI programs with those of other mission entities. Observations of progress since inception suggest that the synergy developed at the planning stage substantially helped USAID/Kosovo and OTI establish a close and cooperative partnership during implementation.¹¹

How was transition assistance implemented in Kosovo? What were the strengths and weaknesses of the approach?

Activities

OTI supported activities in three areas:

- *Community organization support.* OTI helped Kosovars to form community-level organizations that represented their members in identifying and implementing local, small-scale improvement projects to be financed with OTI grant funding. This emphasis involved more than 80 percent of the OTI program grants and budget. By September 2000, OTI had awarded 293 grants to CICs for a total of \$6.6 million.

OTI promoted a "culture of participation" in Kosovo. In the absence of locally elected leaders (until the end of 2000), CICs filled an important leadership gap and helped the population gain experience in political organizing. These groups were an important

¹⁰ IREX.

¹¹ Lawrence Rossin, "An Appreciation of USAID/Kosovo's OTI Program," February 2000, 3. OTI also attributed the relative ease of handoff to personal relationships and management style: "Regarding the Mission's buy-in to OTI's program and OTI's commitment to work within the Mission, this process was greatly facilitated by an AID Mission chief and an OTI director who knew each other from other Balkan venues and an appreciation by the Mission Chief of the value of OTI to the entire Mission team and AID effort. This is not always the case. An OTI director can be a cowboy resistant to collaboration and lines of authority and Mission directors may often feel threatened by OTI's approach."

transition tool for accomplishing program goals.¹² OTI encouraged CICs to develop toward an “ideal type,” adjusting tactics to maximize citizen engagement and impact.

OTI staff provided assistance to community groups based on three essential principles: 1) diversity, including representation of women and youth and the full range of Kosovar political parties that emerged; 2) participation, including rotating informal memberships to encourage broad participation and discourage assumptions of entitlement; and 3) commitment, including requiring CICs to demonstrate seriousness by providing financial or in-kind support to complement OTI funding.

Initially OTI worked with VOCA to identify agricultural opportunities. VOCA then shifted its focus to agricultural cooperative groups identified with OTI’s help. OTI subsequently encouraged VOCA to expand its work with CICs to reach more rural Kosovars. This may lead to VOCA’s renewed contact with other CICs.

- *Cultivation of professional and independent media.* The objective of media grants was to enhance organizational capacity to provide the public with a variety of public affairs information in a professionally competent manner. Media was tightly controlled during the 10 years of Serbian rule, and Kosovar journalists had no experience in independent research, analysis, and/or reporting. OTI targeted activities that would help broaden coverage, improve reporting skills, provide legal assistance, and establish centers of excellence. It also supported media association development: 19 independent radio stations formed the Association of Independent Electronic Media of Kosovo in August 2000 to strengthen their role in Kosovo and to lobby. OTI awarded 45 grants to media with a value exceeding \$1 million.
- *Support to civil society.* OTI chose a limited number of organizations (e.g., professional groups, women’s organizations, student and trade unions, and legal aid groups) to help expand civic awareness. It issued 23 grants totaling \$180,000.

Operations

OTI manages seven field offices: its headquarters in Pristina and regional offices in Peja, Gjakova, Ferizaj, Prizren, Gjilan, and Mitrovic, staffed by local hires with expertise and knowledge of the principal players in the respective regions. The CDIE evaluator visited CICs in each of four regions: Pristina, Peja, Gjilan, and Ferizaj.

Unlike most recent OTI country programs, the Kosovo program does not use the SWIFT (Support Which Implements Fast Transitions) contract, in part because the initial regional program (that included Kosovo) preceded its initiation.¹³ Instead, OTI used RONCO Corporation, the regional program contractor, to develop the program and implement activities in five of the seven Kosovo field offices after the war. OTI engaged IOM to implement its activities in the Prizren and Ferizaj field offices, across the border from

¹² USAID/OTI/Kosovo, “The Kosovo Transition Initiative: Program Strategy and Implementation Guide: September 1 to December 31, 2000,” 14.

¹³ SWIFT is an indefinite quantity contract for transition programs that rapidly deploys staff and resources, enabling OTI startup within a few weeks.

Albania where IOM was already implementing the Albanian program. As an international organization affiliated with the UN, IOM had greater operational flexibility than a U.S. contractor. OTI noted that the grantee can operate under less restrictive security regulations than those imposed by USOP. Further, OTI had successfully used a grant to IOM to implement a similar program for Haiti, as well as the one for Albania.

OTI eventually shifted all program management to IOM, opting to cancel the RONCO contract when serious delays (several months) in payment and implementation occurred in tracking multiple country disbursements. Recognizing OTI's productive relationships with the Kosovar communities, donors—such as the UN Development Programme (UNDP)—agreed to provide some funding to CICs during the interim period. A one-page Memorandum of Understanding between OTI/Kosovo and IOM laid out the expectations of both parties, including maintaining the Kosovo initiatives with CICs and supporting media and civil society. This Memorandum supplemented the grant, which had had a broader scope. IOM-funded personnel now staff all field offices.

A grant provides more autonomy for the recipient than a contract. Both IOM and OTI reported satisfaction with the grant arrangement. OTI considered IOM staff an integral part of the OTI/Kosovo team and operation. IOM reported that it was comfortable working closely and collaboratively with OTI, which as the IOM Kosovo manager admitted, was not always the case in its experience with other organizations.

IOM and OTI worked out a “SWIFT-like” approach to manage implementation. OTI retained some funds to permit programming flexibility as needed. The OTI-IOM arrangement was perhaps unique in using a grant to produce results similar to those using the SWIFT contract. Its replication elsewhere would likely depend on whether a grantee and OTI could develop the mutually agreeable arrangement that characterized their relationship in Kosovo.

OTI/Kosovo used a “self-correcting” mechanism to evaluate its programs, including periodic one- or two-day retreats to review activities, progress, and citizen reaction and feedback. It developed a baseline review of citizens' attitudes and perceptions as a basis for mid-term and final reviews. OTI/Kosovo also solicited information through frequent staff retreats (every two months), weekly senior staff meetings on program direction, and twice-monthly meetings with mission office heads. During the first six weeks of the program, the entire team met every night. Initially, both the USOP chief of mission and the USAID mission director attended these meetings. At least twice annually, the entire OTI staff identified lessons learned and changes needed in its approach and emphasis.

Coordination with Partners

OTI very successfully helped CICs leverage more than \$4 million in other donor assistance to complement the \$6.6 million of OTI CIC funding. A good example of donor coordination was in Krushec (jurisdiction of the OTI Peja field office), where OTI funded road improvements and helped the CIC obtain funding from other sources for other activities, including the following:

- UNDP built a school fence to keep out animals
- CONCERN, a U.S. organization, rebuilt the health clinic;
- UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) provided plastic sheeting for damaged housing;
- the Albanian-American Society provided eight computers for the school; and
- other groups—Mercy Corps, Doctors Without Borders, and the German and Swiss Red Crosses—provided additional assistance.

OTI-donor cooperation usually took place at the local level (village, town, or city district), the locus of OTI activity, rather than at the regional or provincial level where the longer term program offices were active.

Budget and Financial Management

OTI/Kosovo staff reported having an adequate budget to accomplish their objectives. About one dollar was spent for administrative support for every two dollars spent for program delivery, figures similar to other cases studied, including Indonesia, East Timor, and Nigeria. However, because this ratio includes the entire IOM operation as an administrative cost, OTI indicated that the real ratio of administrative to program costs is probably somewhat lower. IOM employs and maintains for OTI a comprehensive database of grants and operations, which is also part of the OTI worldwide database system.

Mission Support

OTI now uses mission systems for operations support. In addition to OTI's contribution to State Department-managed administrative support, OTI recently began paying for indirect mission support, including motor pool, drivers, rents, and other operating expenses. OTI reported that this arrangement was somewhat more expensive than elsewhere, where such services are gratis. OTI was also concerned that the USAID mission's insistence on OTI's contributing a fair share may have a downside—for instance, slower staff hiring because the USAID mission takes longer to recruit and fill positions. Subsequent to the CDIE visit, the mission signed a memorandum of understanding with OTI specifying cost allocations for procurement, vehicle operations, executive and financial management services, and other support. OTI saw this as a unique approach to charging OTI field support costs, perhaps reflecting the fact that the Agency may not yet have devised a proportional system for allocating operational expenses to OTI field operations.¹⁴

Authority Relationships

All USAID entities in the field, including OTI, reported to the USAID/Kosovo mission director. This relationship was established at the insistence of the director, who obtained the USAID Administrator's agreement for the arrangement. At the same time, the mission director allowed OTI/Kosovo to maintain regular communications and relationships with

¹⁴ The CDIE study team was unable to compare USAID/Kosovo's specific operational expense allocation with that of other missions where OTI operates.

OTI/Washington, let OTI/Kosovo staff work relatively independently within the USAID mission structure, and did not second-guess OTI/Kosovo decisions, grants, and operations. The partnership was effective because both OTI and non-OTI staff recognized and wanted to preserve the complementary relationship and their respective program strengths. The OTI field director met regularly—about every two weeks—with the mission director.

The combination of this authority relationship, a strategic plan that closely integrated OTI activities with those of the long-term USAID program, and collocation of offices with integrated operations produced a somewhat unique model for OTI field programs. It was clearly effective. The management style, the relatively small size of Kosovo, and other factors—such as an appreciation by personnel of the respective relief, transition, and sustainable development roles among USAID entities—undoubtedly facilitated positive collaboration. But clearly the authority relationships were important in establishing the formal structure that guided field operations.

In summary, OTI transition assistance included support for community organizations, media, and civil society organizations. The community development model, combining the development of participation and democratic skills with grants for priority, locally identified reconstruction, was particularly appropriate in the Kosovo context. The grants provided the incentive needed to encourage new behavior in the community context. This grassroots development model was not new to the development world, but OTI developed a comparative advantage in using it to meet basic postconflict needs. The efforts in media, while short-term, provided skills that may in the long term contribute to better reporting and airing of public issues. The limited support to civil society organizations helped increase civic awareness.

OTI developed an operationally sound system with respect to mission management. OTI's grant to IOM permitted effective and coordinated management of the seven field offices, including the headquarters in the USAID mission in Pristina. Approximately one dollar was spent for administrative support for every two dollars spent for program, most of which is now implemented through IOM. Coordination with partners brought benefits of additional funding (more than \$4 million) and program replication.

OTI and other mission operation support systems were integrated, with OTI providing its share of expenses. OTI staff reported to the USAID/Kosovo mission director, who allowed OTI to maintain its regular communications and relationships with OTI/Washington. The partnership was effective, buttressed by the integrated strategic program, operations, and offices in Pristina. The system worked smoothly and effectively, leading the evaluators to cite it as model for other OTI programs.

Were transition activities being handed off effectively to other mission offices or donors? Was the duration of transition programs appropriate?

OTI/Kosovo noted the difficulty in planning for handoff in the face of the unfolding regional political situation, including questions surrounding Kosovo's future political status and the impact of Serbian leadership changes. Nonetheless, USAID/Kosovo will benefit from OTI's accumulated experience from its seven field offices and its contacts with more than 3,000 Kosovars directly associated with CICs. USAID mission leadership indicated that enough work will have been completed at the CIC level with the October 28, 2000 elections to create sufficient momentum for developing the longer term democracy/governance program.

OTI planned to phase out its program by the end of 2001. This was appropriate because of the progress on elections and USAID/Kosovo's plan to assume responsibility for any continuing activities. Numerous USAID/Kosovo contacts indicated that OTI's plans were sufficient to allow the USAID mission to assume responsibility for appropriate key activities by the end of 2001. An example was the adoption of the OTI model to build local NGO capacity. Proposed handoff options being considered by the mission included continuing to support some of the seven field offices to augment local-level contacts and maintaining some support for CICs by extending the IOM grant or by incorporating continued CIC support under the USAID program (SO 1).¹⁵

OTI's successful leveraging of more than \$4 million from other sources for the CICs can also be considered as a type of hand-off or longer-term expansion of its activities.

In summary, OTI planning for handoff appeared appropriate and timely. Both long-term program planners and OTI staff were thoughtfully planning for OTI's departure and the assumption of selected activities by the mission for completion. USAID/Kosovo is likely to adopt one of the handoff options identified above. OTI's effective cooperation with other donors provided additional opportunities to hand off its activities and approaches.

Were transition activities achieving their objectives effectively?

The dimensions of the OTI program for the period are presented in the following table.

Table 1. Number of Grants and Funding for OTI Activities
(July 1999–September 2000)
(Values in thousand dollars)

Activity	Grants	Value
Community improvement councils	293	6,600
Civil society support	23	180
Media support	45	1,000
Totals:	361	7,780

Source: OTI

¹⁵ An OTI consultant visiting Kosovo in September 2000 proposed these options.

OTI's effort was clearly centered on community-level activities. Media support was also an important activity. The following discussion is based on information from numerous documents (including evaluations and operational reports), key informant interviews, and group discussions.

Community Improvement Councils

The results as of September 2000 were:¹⁶

- 74 schools repaired or built
- 9 roads improved and 5 bridges repaired or reconstructed
- Electrical supply for 41 communities improved
- 27 water systems repaired
- 2 factories rehabilitated
- 6 sewage systems repaired or built
- 6 health clinics or hospitals repaired and supplied
- 13 postwar community cleanup projects completed
- 6 central heating systems installed or improved
- 15 community and/or youth centers repaired
- 18 buses and 8 garbage trucks provided
- Equipment for rebuilding 500 houses provided
- New roofing for 250 houses supplied

An OTI-funded assessment¹⁷ confirmed the appropriateness of the CIC approach in the absence of local government officials and noted important contributions to citizens' recovery from the effects of the war.¹⁸ The assessment categorized the types and span of assistance but was unable to draw conclusions about the collective impact of the numerous, widespread kinds of activities supported through the grants. Nevertheless, it did show that the CIC effort was an effective vehicle in helping communities articulate their needs and interests, learn organizing principles, and dampen an elitist tendency to vest power in a small number of traditional leaders. It noted in addition that OTI's local councils were learning to frame their concerns and priorities to the international community, thereby helping donors respond better to local needs.

CIC membership benefiting directly from OTI assistance totaled more than 3,000 individuals who represented the interests of an estimated 30,000–40,000 citizens. OTI estimated that about half the Kosovar population—approximately one million people—will ultimately benefit.¹⁹ While the estimate is impossible to verify at this point and would require a more systematic post-OTI impact analysis, the CDIE evaluator found ample evidence that

¹⁶ OTI, "KTI Program Strategy and Implementation Guide: September 1 to December 31, 2000."

¹⁷ OTI, "OTI Impact Assessment of Kosovo," April 2000.

¹⁸ See Annex C of this paper for the specific contributions of the initial year.

¹⁹ OTI, "KTI Program Implementation Guide: May 1 to August 31, 2000," 6.

the CIC process engaged members in public affairs and built consensus on issues of importance and relevance to the community.

OTI used the following criteria to assess CICs' effectiveness: 1) the extent to which CICs produced leaders within their communities and more broadly within Kosovo; 2) the level of additional resources leveraged; 3) the number of CICs or civic groups that continued on their own to engage in effective outreach activities; and 4) the extent to which the CIC process was being replicated in other communities. The discussion below notes progress in the targeted areas.

- *Producing Leaders, Involving Minorities.* The October 2000 municipal elections were a significant event. More than 130 CIC members competed in Kosovo's first-ever democratic elections. By helping community members develop skills to organize and undertake priority actions, OTI helped prepare the population for participation in the more formalized systems of representative and accountable government. At least 25 CIC members won seats among the 5,350 candidates competing for 869 seats. OTI/Kosovo also funded 25 election-related projects, including spot media announcements and discussions of issues in public and in the media prior to the elections. The CDIE evaluator participated in an OTI-sponsored evening event in Ferizaj, where women candidates for the elections from all but one of the political parties presented their positions and platforms. The mainly female audience filled the Ferizaj opera house and listened attentively to the presentations, although without a great deal of active participation. This was but one event of the much larger democratic process to which most Kosovars had not previously been exposed.

OTI recognized the importance of involving the ethnic Serb minority (5 percent of the population) in the CIC effort. In view of the violent, turbulent history of the province, it had already programmed \$705,000, approximately 8.3 percent of its Kosovo budget, for minorities and had plans to increase support. Forty CICs served both Kosovar Albanian and Serb communities. Most Serbs remaining in Kosovo are in Gjilane. Of the CICs established in Gjilane, 45 percent were in Serb communities.

Minorities presented a particular challenge to OTI because each community organized its members somewhat differently. Although the security environment for minority communities was difficult, OTI was pleased with the results of its minority efforts. Minorities benefited from community improvement projects and gained experience in participating in identifying and remedying their most pressing needs. Minority participation in this effort contributed to U.S. Government political objectives in Kosovo.

- *Leveraging Partner Resources.* By fostering partnerships OTI leveraged additional assistance, expanding the program's impact beyond its direct efforts. As noted, OTI leveraged \$4 million from other sources, or 60 percent above the CIC allocation of \$6.6 million. Communities contributed an additional \$2 million in cash and in kind. OTI considered the community contributions as the more important measure of success.

OTI partnered with the World Bank and UNDP as they worked through local CICs as interim local authorities before local elections were held on October 28, 2000. The UN Mission in Kosovo also asked OTI to collaborate on economic recovery activities in selected regions. The European Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, responsible for democratization in Kosovo, adopted the CIC approach in its own community support program. In collaborating in the rehabilitation of a brick factory in Gjakova, the UN and the Swiss more than doubled the OTI investment. The factory became an important source of reconstruction material and provided 60 new jobs.

- *Sustainability.* CICs prompted among their members a previously unknown process of democratic participation and debate over public issues of importance to them and their future. As the former USOP chief of mission commented, “OTI is supporting grassroots democracy in a region where both grassroots decisionmaking and democracy itself are far from the historical or cultural norm.... I am impressed with the sustainability of OTI’s approach, as many of the CICs have taken on a life of their own.”²⁰

While it would be unusual to attribute sustainability to OTI’s efforts given the nature of their short- to medium-term assistance, in this case OTI contributed to the development of long-term political objectives. It remained to be seen whether CICs as *institutions* will survive or whether local governments will absorb their *functions*. Monitoring the evolving role of CICs as Kosovo implements local government may provide useful information for future programs.

- *Replication.* Remaining to be assessed are 1) the extent to which the CIC approach is adopted by other communities without direct support from OTI and 2) the extent to which OTI-funded CICs or civic groups continue their activities after OTI departs.

Complementing Other Activities

OTI also worked closely with other teams as noted below:

- USAID/Kosovo staff reported gaining a strategically important understanding of Kosovars’ development needs and priorities through OTI-developed CIC contacts.
- OTI provided complementary support for the mission’s media, election, and civil society programs; Democratic Reform Program; and community improvement program, which complemented the broader mission Community Infrastructure Program. OTI’s advocacy group formation program prepared CICs to articulate community needs with the new municipal governments and complemented the mission Community Self-Reliance effort.
- The National Democratic Institute (NDI), with OTI assistance, initiated two activities supporting the country democracy/governance program. One, a civic education effort, used small groups to jumpstart democratic institutional development. OTI’s local CIC groups provided forums for NDI efforts. Through CICs, OTI helped identify local and youth leaders for collaboration with NDI on civic education programs for educational

²⁰ USOP, cable, September 2000.

curricula. The other NDI initiative involved election monitoring. OTI played an important supporting role with its CIC work and media and public service announcement preparation for the October 28, 2000 municipal elections.

The USAID strategy described OTI's contribution to USAID and wider U.S. Government objectives for Kosovo as follows:²¹

OTI has developed over 200 community improvement councils (CICs) in literally hundreds of villages and towns.... The CICs reflect the diversity in the communities they represent and play a catalytic role in prioritizing and addressing the needs of the community through consensus building, public outreach, and the importance of local contribution. The program has drawn increasing numbers of Kosovars into the process of deciding their own future and has leveraged \$4 million in other donor funds for priority projects. CICs are now focusing their attention on the upcoming elections, contemplating ways of ensuring that candidates are responsive to their local and practical concerns. A grassroots "Civic Forum" activity soon to be implemented by USAID grantee National Democratic Institute (NDI) will complement OTI's ongoing civil society strengthening interventions.

OTI's media activities have provided assistance to several professional media outlets in Kosovo since July of 1999.... OTI has made a substantial contribution to the reestablishment of media institutions destroyed by the war and in restoring geographic coverage to the province.

OTI is providing basic support for the creation of high quality news and information programming, coverage of public events, more comprehensive coverage of local news, successful citizen action, and other events that stress the importance of self-reliance of Kosovars. OTI will also engage in funding and carrying out, along with its local partners, public service and education campaigns on a variety of public interest issues, from "tolerance" to "improved trash/litter disposal" to "citizens' duties and rights."

Maintaining Programming Flexibility

Following the CDIE evaluator's visit to Kosovo, OTI held a retreat in Gjakova on February 22–23, 2001 to review and refine its program strategy through expected phaseout in September 2001. OTI field staff, two Washington staff, the USAID mission director, and a representative from Save the Children participated. An important result was that OTI management prepared an updated strategy for the final phase of the program for field staff. This strategy promoted active functional relationships between the new municipal representatives and their constituents. The retreat highlighted the flexibility of the KTI approach in adapting to the changing situation in Kosovo by refining objectives and working methods.²² OTI regarded its approach as critical in changing course when necessary, soliciting field input, and permitting flexibility of action and decentralized decisionmaking.

²¹ USAID/Kosovo, "Strategy for Kosovo 2001-2003," 24–25.

²² OTI, *OTI Hot Topics*, March 10, 2001. The newsletter reported: "Craig Buck, USAID/Kosovo and Montenegro Mission Director, staff from the Mission's Program Office, expatriate and Kosovar staff from Save the Children, and three staff from the CISP program also attended the retreat. The presence of other USAID

OTI also funded a midcourse review by two independent consultants, who examined the effectiveness of CIC programming since this evaluation. This exercise produced a series of lessons learned²³ that enabled OTI to refine its approach. OTI regards the KTI approach as an effective model for OTI programs elsewhere.²⁴ OTI is planning a final exit evaluation.

In summary, OTI made 361 transition assistance grants for a total of \$7.78 million from July 1999 to September 2000. Valuable contributions through CICs include many structures rebuilt benefiting 30,000–40,000 citizens, organizations formed, and democratic decisionmaking skills imparted and practiced at the grassroots level. OTI also successfully leveraged millions of dollars in additional funding from donors and participating communities, which provided substantial self-help contributions. OTI assistance also effectively complemented other mission programs by identifying local contacts, piloting the community development model, and providing civic education and media support for elections. OTI's activities contributed substantially to achieving USAID objectives in Kosovo. Flexible programming characterizing transition assistance was critical in permitting program changes over time as needed.

Lessons Learned and Recommendation

Transition assistance played a valuable role in forming grassroots organizations at the community level in seven areas of Kosovo, imparting basic democratic practices, and initiating reconstruction efforts. The activities reflect OTI's comparative advantage in initiating activities at the local level. The Kosovo program was integrated nearly seamlessly within the USAID strategic plan, permitting USAID to maximize results from its investment. OTI employed a flexible programming approach that allowed for strategy changes as needed as the transition evolved.

staff and implementing partners underscores just how highly others consider the KTI program as a resource, added new perspectives to the discussions, and encouraged more collaborative relationships—increasingly important as KTI handoff discussions continue between Mission and OTI Kosovo management.”

²³ OTI, “KTI Program Strategy and Implementation Guide: September 1 to December 31, 2000,” 4–5. The Lessons Learned are contained in Annex D to this study.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 4. In reviewing this report in draft, OTI staff observed: “this is the first time it (OTI) has tried this type of programming with such commitment and in such a high-profile setting. It worked but OTI had to overcome its own fear of failure and sense of tradition to make it work. This type of programming requires a tremendous amount of up-front commitment. Without it, fear of failure can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Such programs must be decentralized and certain operational costs—such as additional staff in additional field offices—are not just ‘overhead’ but necessary *program* elements for the extensive involvement with local residents. It is a model that OTI can use elsewhere with more confidence and commitment. In the rest of Serbia, community-based programming is just beginning; it will benefit from the institutional knowledge acquired with the KTI and the ‘lessons learned.’ The KTI was largely a test case, the ‘guinea pig.’ Its success has emboldened OTI and others to push the frontiers of this type of programming further—in Kosovo and elsewhere.”

Lessons Learned

1. Kosovo presents a successful model for coordinating USAID transition programs.

The mission evolved a successful operation to carry out postconflict relief, transition, and development, presenting a successful model for effective coordination of sustainable development and OTI transition programs. Factors contributing to this success included 1) placement of field authority under the mission director, 2) a management style that provided sufficient independence for OTI to manage activity implementation, 3) a strategic plan that closely integrated OTI and other mission activities, 4) a shared understanding among OTI and sustainable development staff of their complementary roles in achieving shared objectives, and 5) office collocation in Pristina. Partners viewed OTI as part of the USAID presence rather than as a separate entity. CDIE interviewed mission directors who had experience with OTI programs; many had concerns about inadequate coordination and integration of the OTI program with longer term mission programs. The Kosovo case thus holds considerable promise as a model for future OTI field programs.

2. OTI's community development approach was effective.

The community development approach used in Kosovo effectively introduced basic democratic processes at the grassroots level, while helping war-devastated communities address reconstruction needs. Grants were provided for community-identified infrastructure and services as an incentive and a means to introduce and practice democratic organizational skills. OTI successfully used its field offices throughout the province to provide the close consultation with and support for the communities required to realize results with this approach. Rather than apply a rigid structure for developing community interaction, OTI helped Kosovars establish flexible structures—CICs—that could operate with democratic principles when local governmental structures were not in place.

3. Emphasizing community self-help and self-reliance discouraged dependency.

By encouraging communities to seek multiple sources of funding and assistance, OTI expanded resources and discouraged dependency. Even in poor, devastated postconflict situations such as Kosovo, communities can provide in-kind assistance or identify alternative funding to help them achieve community goals. By insisting that communities obtain other resources to complement OTI support, OTI discouraged dependence on a sole funding source. The self-help approach also helped inculcate skills for obtaining other assistance and boosted community confidence in its capacity to meet needs and improve its wellbeing.

Recommendation

Report results through the regular USAID reporting channel.

OTI program results are best reported in the USAID/Kosovo Result Review and Resources Report. OTI has its own results framework that includes intermediate results independent of those of country strategic plans. OTI/Kosovo initially developed its program with this framework in

mind, establishing objectives that differed from the USAID/Kosovo strategic plan. While the USAID/Kosovo strategy identified links between its program objectives and those of the OTI program, it was not clear whether the results would be reported principally within the USAID/Kosovo framework or that of OTI. Because the principal results of all transition programs were those realized within the country context itself, it is appropriate for OTI to report the results for its transition programs primarily in the USAID/Kosovo report.

Annex A: Organizations And People Interviewed

USAID Mission

Craig Buck, Mission Director
Andy Sisson, Deputy Director
Jack Winn, Program Officer
Mike Cox, Democracy Governance Strategic Objective Team Leader
Neil Kester, Executive Officer
Ray Jennings, OTI/Washington (former Kosovo country program director)
Jason Aplon, OTI/Kosovo Deputy Director, Pristina
Kirpatrick Day, OTI/Kosovo Acting Director, Pristina (former head of Peja field office)
Anne Lee, OTI/Washington (on TDY to Kosovo)

Implementing Contractors/Grantees

International Organization for Migration
Stephen Lennon, Director, Pristina Office
Ivana Sirovic, Information and Operations Officer, Pristina Office
Iliriana Kacanuku, Program Assistant, Pristina Office
Haki Tigani, Program Assistant, Peja Office
Gail Long, Director, Gjilan Office
Mentor Kazazi, Program Assistant, Gjakova Office
Brian Kelly, Director, Ferizaj Office
Blerim Bytyqi, Program Assistant, Ferizaj Office
Nehat Vata, Program Assistant, Ferizaj Office
Haki Abazi, Program Assistant, Ferizaj Office

National Democratic Institute
Dana Diaconu, Election Monitoring Program
Ross Reid, Political Parties Program
Koebel Price, Civic Forum Program
Rick Holtzaple, Senior Program Officer, Central and Eastern Europe,
Washington, DC (visitor to Kosovo)

Department of State/Kosovo

Lawrence Rossin, State Department, former chief of mission,
U.S. Office in Pristina (USOP)*

Local Community and Stakeholders

CICs in Kryshec (Peja), Gjilan and Vrapqic,

* Evaluator was unable to interview him but used his February 2000 cable.

Talnofc (Ferizej), Sunny Hill (Pristina)

Annex B: Documents Consulted

Lawrence Rossin, “Kosovo: An Appreciation of USAID/Kosovo’s OTI Program.” Cable, U.S. Office Kosovo: February 24, 2000.

James Stukel, USAID/OTI, “Memo to USAID/Kosovo”: September 28, 2000.

USAID/OTI, “Kosovo Transition Initiative Internal Evaluation: Summary Findings.” Draft: September 18, 2000.

USAID/Kosovo/OTI, “Briefing Book”: August 2000.

USAID/Kosovo/OTI Kosovo, “Kosovo Transition Initiative: Program Strategy and Implementation Guide: September 1 to December 31, 2000.”

USAID/OTI/Kosovo, “Kosovo Transition Initiative: Program Implementation Guide: May 1 to August 30, 2000.”

USAID/OTI, “OTI Country Programs: July 11, 2000.”

USAID/OTI, “Kosovo Field Report May 19–June 2, 2000.”

USAID/OTI, “Impact Assessment of Kosovo,” April 2000.

USAID/OTI, “The Community Improvement Process in Kosovo—Experience to Date,” OTI Fact Sheet: August 26, 1999.

USAID/Kosovo, “Transition Assistance Assessment Report October 29–November 11, 1998.”

USAID, “USAID Strategy for Kosovo—A Memo to A/AID,” October 1, 1998.

Annex C: The Community Improvement Process In Kosovo—Experience To Date²⁵

Overview

USAID/OTI's Kosovo Transition Initiative (KTI) is designed to assist Kosovars in the process of rebuilding their communities while preparing them for the challenges inherent in democratic self-governance. Through its six regional offices and a Pristina headquarters, OTI assists local citizens in forming and organizing *informal community improvement councils* (CICs) in villages and towns throughout Kosovo. These groups of local citizens identify and help implement OTI-funded community improvement projects. To date, OTI has organized over 35 different community groups, with 82 separate meetings, from across Kosovo.

Community Improvement Councils (CICs) – Definition

While there is no formal definition of a CIC, an ideal model exists. To engage Kosovars initially, OTI is working with a variety of different types of community groups. In each community, different terms or titles are used depending on the nature of the interaction with residents. Over time, OTI aims to broaden representation in these groups (or establish new ones), increase their interaction with ordinary citizens, and encourage CIC's to function independently in identifying and addressing citizens' needs and concerns. That said, the following characteristics of existing CICs is based on OTI's experience and methodology thus far:

- They are *not* comprised exclusively of representatives of the more formal interim local governments, though members of these local governments almost always participate.
- They are expected to be inclusive of all political parties active in the region.
- Inclusion of women leaders in the groups is strongly encouraged—and we will cancel meetings with groups if representation does not improve over time. However, participation by women has been problematic.
- Local NGOs (including the Mother Teresa Society, the LDK Women's Forum, youth groups, and other groups) tend to be active participants.
- Participation by other community leaders, such as teachers or professors, elders, and business leaders, greatly enhance the quality and functioning of the CIC process.

²⁵ USAID/OTI, "The Community Improvement Process in Kosovo—Experience to Date," OTI Fact Sheet: August 26, 1999. This is an OTI information sheet prepared in August 1999 that shows specifics of CIC accomplishments.

- These CIC's are constantly evolving, in response to a rapidly changing environment and as broader participation by more and more citizens is encouraged. As they gain experience, it is expected that CIC's will assume greater responsibility in facilitating meetings of ordinary citizens to identify community needs. It is anticipated that this process will nurture viable candidates for eventual elections with experience in responding to citizen needs and concerns through a democratic process.
- The CICs are not intended to replace formal governing structures; they are meant to complement them—and in some cases, challenge them to be more responsive to citizen priorities.

A Note on Multi-Ethnicity

When the KTI program began in January 1999, the goal of establishing multi-ethnic councils was one of our objectives. Upon resumption of the program in June 1999, we have found a very different working environment. First, there are far fewer “mixed” communities. Those which still exist are rapidly disappearing as Serbs seek the relative safety of purely Serb villages or larger municipalities. In regions where mixed populations exist, OTI carefully strives to work in an evenhanded fashion with all ethnic groups. Examples of this include:

- In Prizren, which is a mixed Bosnian, Albanian, and Turkish population, we have found that these groups can work well together in mixed community meetings.
- The village of Cernica in the Gjilan region is a ethnically mixed village. Our efforts to bring the groups together spurred tremendous debate on stolen property issues. We are temporarily working with two community groups for this village—one Serb and one Albanian.
- In the mixed region of Gjilan, OTI is working with two Serb villages, three Albanian villages, and one mixed village.

CIC Regional Summary to Date

The development of CIC's across the region has varied a great deal. Factors which seem to influence their development include: the political environment both before and after the conflict of the last few months, the amount of damage and trauma to the region, the ethnic break-down of the region, and the status of the local economy. What follows is a sampling of the diversity of groups we are working with:

Ferizaj/Urosevac: OTI has broken the main town of Ferizaj into several smaller councils based on sector issues (agriculture, recreation, utilities, and telecommunications).

- *Agriculture Improvement Council (Ferizaj):* The first meeting of this council brought together over 70 farmers from the 5 agriculture zones of Ferizaj. The farmers, old and young, were so anxious to have their views heard that some pouted when asked to wait for one to finish expressing their positions. OTI staff was told that forums of this type

never before occurred in Kosovo. At the end of the meeting the group elected a smaller council. The top priority for the council is finishing a second floor for the local school that the community built several years ago.

Gjakova/Djakovica Region: In the city of Gjakova, OTI staff have split the city into five neighborhood councils, reflecting the vastly different needs of different regions of the city.

- *Gjakova Old Town Council:* The most active Council in the region is the Old Town Council. This Council was formed to deal with the very difficult issues facing the section of town called the Old Town Bazaar. This historic 450-year-old market place boasted 700 privately owned shops, but was completely burned down during the first days of the NATO airstrikes. Participants in the Council include private architects and builders, leaders of cultural and historical organizations, the shop-owners association, and members of the interim municipal government. Together, this group has developed a multi-phased, comprehensive approach to reconstruction of the Old Town, which they call the Gjakova 2000 Project.
- *Council of Independent Women of Junik:* A subgroup of the Junik Village Council has formed, comprised of 8-10 women who are single head of households whose men are either missing or have been killed. They range in age from mid-20s to 60-plus years. They live communally with their children. Their living conditions are poor and their economic situation is dire. They have now formed a council and selected a name, “the Council of Independent Women of Junik.” Their overriding priority is finding the means to support themselves and their children.

Gjilan/Gjilane Region

- *Vlastica Village Council:* Vlastica, one of the poorest Albanian towns in the Gjilan region, has a population of 2,000. This town suffered the destruction of 70 percent% of its housing, with 40 percent% completely not livable. It also suffered a massacre of its population in mid-June. Despite these hardships, the community is eagerly participating in town meetings, and has always pointed to community facilities such as the school as higher priority than repair of individual housing.
- *Pasjane Village Council:* Pasjane is a Serb village of approximately 1500 in the Gjilan region. The council is made up of school officials, interim government officials, students, farmers, and veterinarians. The village has been very open to working with OTI and even offered to send a letter of cooperation to the neighboring ethnic Albanian Vlastica Village Council. Security is the primary concern of this village council.

Peja/Pec Region

- *Peja-Town Political Forum:* In Peja, a high-level municipality-wide “Political Forum” brings together 14 representatives, including the KLA-appointed regional administrator, the town mayor, the president of the LDK party, the presidents of the Mother Teresa Society and the Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms, representatives of smaller political parties, respected academics, and intellectuals from the community at-

large. Given the high-stature of this group, they serve to prioritize communities needs very broadly and—as a collective body—bring community issues to other international organizations, including UNMIK and KFOR.

Annex D: Lessons Learned²⁶

A number of insights have been gained while implementing the phases of programming described above. The objectives and tactics suggested in this document have been adjusted to reflect these lessons. The following points summarize some of the more important lessons learned to date.

- During the first months of the program, it was critical to demonstrate that the KTI was capable of and willing to “deliver” assistance. This enhanced the KTI’s credibility and opened doors to more active community engagement during later phases of the Initiative.
- The greatest degree of legitimacy and credibility was gained in locations where the time between public consensus on specific needs and implementation of a solution was minimized.
- It continues to be important, at every stage of the program, to articulate the ultimate goals of the KTI to local partners even as staff work with less than optimal groups and communities. Local partners that have been made aware from the start that the KTI is primarily about community organizing and not about simple infrastructure repair are more willing to take additional steps toward greater self-reliance and independent organizing in future projects.
- Attempts at building successful regional or large municipal CICs failed. Relationships between the public and the councils were too abstract and the connection between the community improvement project and public input was too tenuous and diluted.
- During the humanitarian crisis that characterized the first post-war winter in Kosovo, it was difficult to get citizens to focus on broader civic issues. During the period, it was best to shift the Initiative’s focus to deal specifically with the crisis at hand while being opportunistic in maximizing public input on pressing issues. Such sensitivity to the mood of the citizens was critical to maintain the KTI’s reputation as being truly responsive to community priorities but this did delay the acceleration of the program’s focus on civic action.
- Arriving at a strict definition for CICs was essential. Staff continue to work with less-than-perfect CICs to move them toward the criteria set out in that definition. This approach is more effective than expecting citizen’s groups to begin as ideal forms from day one. Monitoring progress towards the “ideal” CIC is critical to determining whether to continue engaging with a group.
- The KTI should have implemented a simple but systematic method for measuring CIC and general civic participation during the early phases of the program. Demographic profiles of partner communities and baseline participation surveys should have been

²⁶ OTI, “KTI Program Strategy and Implementation Guide September 1 to December 31, 2000,” 3-4.

completed in early fall of last year. Baseline assessment of the KTIs work in Kosovo will proceed from measures drawn from 1 April 2000 assessments as a result.

- CICs are most effective if the majority of members are not governmental representatives. Early in the KTI, many staff relied on self-appointed local government officials to create the first CICs. These groups often became problematic and ineffective as broader program goals were emphasized.
- The most effective tool in ensuring that CICs represent citizens interests is to introduce and create councils through open, well attended town-hall meetings or public hearings.
- It is important to avoid institutionalizing CICs and to build in systems of public accountability for the councils. In some cases where this did not happen, councils became elitist and expressed needs that were more reflective of narrower personal opinions than community sensibilities.
- A wide array of tools exists to expand participation within CICs to under-representative groups such as women and minorities. These include: creation of sub-groups or “special interest groups,” cultivating minority or women leaders to represent a broader population, and challenging CICs with fixed percentages for participation. Experimentation with these tools is critical to achieve truly representative CICs.